



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

For Immediate Release, JUNE 7, 1943 W

Although comparatively few Americans have ever tasted squid, the canning of this marine mollusk is an old and well established industry in California and before the war more squid than crab was being canned in the United States. Coordinator of Fisheries Harold L. Ickes said today.

In the most recent year for which complete figures are available, the pack of squid amounted to 22,475 cases. The domestic pack of canned crab for the same year was less than 20,000 cases. The canning of squid is confined to California, centering in the region of Monterey Bay. One of the oldest fishery enterprises of the California coast, squid fishing extends from April 1 to June 30. The domestic market is largely confined to California.

Most fishing for squid is done at night, when the schools are located in the surface waters by the phosphorescent glow their movements produce. Squid fishermen distinguish their prey from the abundant California sardine by the fact that the squids make streaks of wavering or "fluttering" light in the water, whereas typical sardine phosphorescence consists of straight lines. Once located, the squids are captured by encircling them in a long net, which is made into a sort of bag by drawing in lines in the lower border.

Squids are related to oysters, clams, and mussels, but unlike most of their relatives have no visible shell. The external armor has been replaced by a compact inner quill called the pen. Taking advantage of this lack of a confining shell, some species of squids grow to such an enormous size that zoologists rate them the largest known invertebrates. A specimen 55 feet long, including the extended tentacles, was once taken on the Grand Banks.

The common commercial squid of California is about a foot long with a crown of tentacles at one end of the elongated body and triangular fins at the other. The mouth, armed with parrot-like beaks, lies in the center of the circle of tentacles. The squid swims backward with great rapidity by shooting out a jet of water from a tubelike siphon in the head region. Schools of squid prey actively on small fishes of various kinds.

On the Atlantic coast squid are commonly taken in ocean pound nets. Large quantities are used as bait in the commercial and sport fisheries and some are sold in the fresh-fish markets. No canning is done on the east coast.